



Rocky Mountain National Park News Release

April 24, 2006
For Immediate Release
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Draft Elk and Vegetation Management Plan **for Rocky Mountain National Park** **Released Today**

The Draft Elk and Vegetation Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Rocky Mountain National Park was released today. It can be accessed at www.nps.gov/romo/planning/elkvegetation/index

Research has shown that the elk herd in Rocky Mountain National Park and the Estes Valley, which is estimated at between 2200 and 3000 animals, is larger, less migratory and more concentrated than it would be under natural conditions. As a result, willow and aspen stands are declining, depriving other wildlife of the important habitat they need.

The plan identifies and assesses various management alternatives and related environmental impacts relative to managing elk and their habitat in the park. The plan will guide park management for the next 20 years.

The plan evaluates a no action alternative and four action alternatives for managing elk and vegetation resources.

- Alternative 1, the no action alternative, would continue current management practices for elk and vegetation within the park.
- Alternative 2, the preferred alternative, would use lethal reduction of elk by agency

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personnel to reach a population target of 1,200 to 1,700 elk within the first four years of the plan, followed by lower levels of lethal reduction during the next 16 years to maintain this population size. This alternative includes the use of elk redistribution techniques to move and disperse elk and up to 545 acres of fencing in aspen communities to exclude elk. Adaptive management is built in to the process so that in later stages of implementation of this alternative, and given appropriate interagency cooperation, the release of intensively managed wolves could be considered as a potential redistribution technique.

- Alternative 3 would rely on gradual lethal reduction spread over 20 years to reduce the herd to a population target of 1,600 to 2,100 elk. This alternative includes the use of elk redistribution techniques to move and disperse elk, and up to 1405 acres of fencing in aspen and montane riparian willow communities to exclude elk.
- Alternative 4 would use a fertility control agent and lethal reduction spread over 20 years to reduce the herd to a population target of 1,600 to 2,100 elk. This alternative includes the use of elk redistribution techniques to move and disperse elk, and up to 1405 acres of fencing in aspen and montane riparian willow communities to exclude elk.
- Alternative 5 would involve the release of a limited number of wolves to be intensively managed and maintained in the park, and lethal reduction by agency staff to reduce the herd to a population target of 1,600 to 2,100 elk within the first four years of the plan, followed by lower levels of lethal reduction during the next 16 years to maintain the population between 1,200 and 2,100 elk. This alternative relies on a few intensively managed wolves to redistribute elk, but also includes the

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potential to use up to 545 acres of fencing in aspen communities to exclude elk as needed.

Public participation is important to the successful development of this Elk and Vegetation Management Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Comments must be received by July 4, 2006. The plan can be reviewed several ways:

- You can visit the new Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website sponsored by the National Park Service. At this website you can review the plan and submit your comments. The address is: **<http://parkplanning.nps.gov>** choose Rocky Mountain National Park in the drop down menu and click "go." Or go to www.nps.gov/romo and follow the links.
- The document will be available to review at all Rocky Mountain National Park Visitor Centers, and at public libraries in Estes Park, Grand Lake, Boulder, Fort Collins, Loveland and Longmont.
- If you do not have internet access, a compact disk or printed copy can be obtained by calling (970) 586-1262.

Public meetings will be scheduled in mid May. Dates and locations are being finalized.

Once the meetings have been arranged we will send out a separate news release and post the information on our website.

Comments may be submitted in several ways:

The preferred method is by the PEPC website **<http://parkplanning.nps.gov>** mentioned above. If using this method please confirm from the system that your message was received. If you do not receive a confirmation please contact Therese Johnson at (970) 586-1262.

By mail: Superintendent, Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, CO 80517

By fax: (970) 586-1397

By email: romo_superintendent@nps.gov

Hand deliver: Rocky Mountain National Park Headquarters, 1000 Highway 36, Estes Park, Colorado

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